

RUSSIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE AT THE MADRID ATENEO IN THE 1860s

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Introduction

On Tuesday, November 23, 1869, the Madrid newspaper *La Discusión: Diario Democrático* carried the following notice: «El Ateneo científico y literario de Madrid, contando con la cooperación de su socio don Constantino Kustodiev, ha establecido una cátedra de idioma ruso» (p. 2). From this brief notice we had earlier identified the Ateneo member as Konstantin Lukich Kustodiev, the Orthodox chaplain assigned to the Russian embassy in Madrid. *

Now it is possible to provide details of Father Kustodiev's life in the Spanish capital and his views concerning the Ateneo. The Russian cleric regularly attended the Ateneo sessions at the same time that Galdós was a member. However, membership in such a secular, liberal-minded society seems to have upset people at the embassy and caused him to be transferred to Hungary in 1870.

The only known Russian-language account of Father Kustodiev and his association with the Ateneo was published by the late M. P. Alexeyev in 1964. ** A translation of this Russian text («Russian Language and Literature at the Madrid Ateneo in the 1860s») follows in its entirety. It is a pleasure to acknowledge the help of my former Russian teacher, Sam F. Anderson (University of Kansas), with this project (including the transliterations which are in accord with the standard used in *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press*).

Translation of Russian Text

The few works about Russian literature in Spain —on the paths of its penetration into that country, about the beginning of its popularity and its subsequent proliferation— usually contain the assertion that Spanish readers' familiarity with it began primarily through the French, and this no earlier than the eighties of the XIX century.¹ Signs of genuine interest in Russian writers, in fact, very distinctly were manifest in Spain after the publication of the book by the authoress Emilia Pardo Bazán (1852-1921), *La revolución y la novela en Rusia: Lecturas en el Ateneo de Madrid* (Madrid, 1877),

* Vernon A. Chamberlin and Jack Weiner, «Galdós's *Doña Perfecta* and Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*: Two Interpretations of the Conflict between Generations» (PMLA), 86 (1971), 19-24.

** *Ocherki istorii ispano-russkikh literaturnykh otnosheniy xvi-xix vv.* (Outline History of Hispano-Russian Literary Relations, Centuries 16-19 [Leningrad: Leningrad University, 1964]), pp. 207-13.

written primarily on the basis of French sources and as serious and substantial as was possible given the author's unfamiliarity with the Russian language. The book was reprinted many times, attracted steady attention, and evoked debates in the Spanish press as well as judgments by Russian critics.²

Pardo Bazán's book consisted of a series of public lectures given at the Madrid Ateneo in 1887 after her return home from Paris, where she had been taken with Russian literature upon reading a French translation of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and Melchoir de Vogüé's *The Russian Novel*. However, neither Pardo Bazán herself, nor the critics of her book, nor her biographers have mentioned that the first attempt to acquaint Spaniards with Russian writers in the lecture hall itself of the Madrid Ateneo was made almost twenty years before her lectures of 1887, and that appearing as lecturer was the Russian writer and historian K. L. Kustodiev who was living in Madrid at the time, and who was well acquainted with the literature of his fatherland, and who himself had participated actively in a series of Russian journals. This, apparently, was the first attempt at a public familiarization of Spaniards with the Russian language and partly with nineteenth-century Russian literature based on primary sources. Because in Spanish literature, as far as we know, information about these lectures is lacking, Kustodiev's own stories about it [sic], in letters published in extracts in a certain Russian journal of limited circulation, are of particular interest.

The Madrid Ateneo (*Ateneo científico y literario de Madrid*), which played an extremely prominent role in the social and cultural life of Spain in the XIX century, was a unique institution which fulfilled simultaneously the function of a scientific-literary club, a public library, and a national university. The official date of its opening is considered to be 1835, as its previous period of organization coincided with the period of political storms in Spain. Not having succeeded in developing its cultural-educational activity, it was closed during a period of political reaction, which had set in.³ From 1835, however, the Ateneo developed continuously, supported by progressive social initiative, and its history is inseparable from the history of the cultural development of Spanish society in the XIX century. The first thought of founding such a center of cultural enlightenment was not born in Spain; it derives from the ancient world, as is indicated by the name itself. Athenaeum—temple of wisdom—was a unique cultural institution. From the end of the XVII century, similar Athenaeums grew up in many cities of Western Europe, the earliest in France (1785), then in England, Belgium, etc., either in the form of clubs, of literary societies, of free «academies» or advanced schools for «auditors,» or courses on various sciences and fine arts.

The distinctiveness of the Madrid Ateneo was its democratic character. In attendance were persons of various callings and circumstances, political parties, professions, and tastes. Government ministers and clerics, workers and petty functionaries enjoyed the same rights and satisfied their intellectual curiosities here. Artists, writers, musicians, and political figures came here elbow to elbow and, in turn, displayed their creative achievements before a numerous and diverse audience. Here public opinion was formed, reputations were made, and various intellectual currents originated. It is characteristic that, after the Madrid Ateneo, similar institutions grew up in other towns

in Spain. An entire network of small Ateneos existed not only in such centers as Barcelona and Seville, but in insignificant Spanish towns as well.⁴ It was, however, precisely in the Madrid Ateneo —the first and most significant institution of that type in Spain— that in the sixties the lectures on Russian language and literature were given by K. L. Kustodiev, and at the end of the eighties, by Pardo Bazán.

Konstantin Lukich Kustodiev (1837-1875) was a unique and very colorful figure for his time. After having received an education at the Saratov seminary and the Moscow Theological Academy, he was assigned in 1862 in the capacity of deacon (literally: psalm reader) to the Russian embassy in Madrid, where he remained until 1870, when he was transferred to Hungary. The eight years which he spent in the capital of Spain, and during which he had a considerable amount of leisure time, were passed with great personal advantage. He attended Madrid University, learned the Spanish language, and studied in the embassy archive. From Spain, Kustodiev sent his articles to various Russian publications: *Vestnik Yevopy* [*European Herald*], *Russky Vestnik* [*Russian Herald*], *Russky Arkhiv* [*Russian Archive*] *Khristsianskoye Chteniye* [*Christian Reading*], etc. Upon receiving in 1864, during his stay in Madrid, the position of priest, Kustodiev in no way limited the interests or themes of his writings about Spain. He reviewed secular Spanish books; he devoted much study to Spanish history (his book *Christianity in Spain under Moslem Domination*, [Moscow: 1867] is a serious work based on primary sources). He published, for the first time and based on manuscript sources, a valuable historical monument —the notes of Duke de Liria concerning Russia in 1736. In a series of «Letters from Spain» in the 60s, Kustodiev gave a lively description of his travel observations and impressions of his trip from Madrid to Valencia, etc. All of his numerous articles⁵ are of indubitable interest, because they were written where the events occurred, and are distinguished by a factual completeness and a vividness of impressions, regardless of whether they are dedicated to the then-contemporary-Spanish question about the prohibition of bull fighting, or to the attitude of Spaniards concerning V. Hugo's *Les Misérables*, to the Cortes' debate about Renan, or to the attitude of the Spanish government toward the new Italian royalty.

His private letters from Spain, excerpts of which were published in Professor T - - sky's (A. S. Trachevsky? F. Ternovsky?) article, «K. L. Kustodiev and His Life in Spain,»⁶ are distinguished also for their very notoriety, as well as for their occasional journalistic acumen. These letters bear graphic witness to the fact that, for the most part, Kustodiev's temperament was that of a journalist and man of letters rather than of one called to church activities. In one of his letters from Madrid in 1868, Kustodiev wrote, «The cassock should require me to stay within the limits of the theological profession, but in this case it is only on holidays, and then for but a short time, that the cloth reminds me of who I am. On other days I am a man in a frock coat. While not remaining strictly in my speciality, neither do I stick with it alone. If it suits me, I work on Russian history as well. I discovered here the dispatches of the Duke de Liria, who was the ambassador in Moscow under Peter II and Anna Ivanovna... I examined these dispatches

and translated them from Spanish into Russian... I am now occupied with a review of the local embassy archive.»⁷ Kustodiev's predilection for the secular way of life, however, went still further, in complete contradiction to traditions at home. He was devoted not only to abstract literary endeavors, but also sought to exercise a broad social function. «I have the honor of being a member of a local learned society, the Ateneo, the center of local education,» wrote Kustodiev in the very same year, 1868. «My friends (and you know that in the West, the meaning of the word *drug*, *Freund*, *ami*, *amigo* —is much broader than it is with us) are even Spanish ministers and ex-ministers, for example, the local minister of finance, Figuerola, a former professor, is my *amigo* and co-conversant... The Ateneo is only my refuge; the society has a fine building, receives many English, French, Italian, American, and all the Spanish newspapers and journals, as well as several German newspapers. It has a respectable library, always open, and has rostra for public lectures. There are a number of clergyman-members; it is possible here to have as your acquaintance the entire world of note and to know about everything.»⁸ In one of the subsequent letters (from 11 November, 1869) Kustodiev informs the same correspondent of the beginning of his lectures on Russian language and literature at the Ateneo: «The local learned society, the Ateneo, where I am a member, invited me to lecture this winter, or to put it more simply to teach Russian language from the podium. I have already been telling you something about this society. All the people here are solid and respectable. Among my students will be one ex-minister, a university professor, and others. I agreed to do it. I do not think that our embassy will find anything undiplomatic in it. However, I think that I shall bring it to their attention anyway. I doubt that much will come of it, but I think that it would not be harmful if the ordinary layman in the West were to know our language, and if the prejudice about our uncouthness were to be dispelled among a few people also. My first lecture will be this evening at nine o'clock. As a matter of curiosity, I shall write you how things start. I speak Spanish, but the Spaniards are masters at speaking...»⁹ Unfortunately, further accounts of this in Kustodiev's letters have not been preserved, or have not been published. It is possible, however, to deduce from unclear indications of his biographers that his lectures were interrupted due neither to any fault of his nor to any indifference on the part of his listeners. Apparently his reckoning that the Russian government would find nothing undiplomatic in these lectures turned out to be unfounded. We have every basis to think that the Madrid lectures of this cleric, dressed for the most part in Western European clothing, touched not only on the Russian language, but on the literature created in it, and that they were held to be prejudicial at the Russian embassy, both for their essence and for their relationship to the lecturer's position. Many Russian embassy functionaries in Madrid for a long time had been looking askance at this priest, who not only so demeaned the cassock, but who was immoderately given to the secular diversions of Madrid. Therefore they attempted to remove him as soon as possible, and, at the beginning of 1870, he was transferred to Hungary. It would be quite interesting to learn who was the initiator of Kustodiev's lectures, who were numbered among his listeners, and what reper-

cussions the lectures he gave in the Ateneo auditorium had. We may express only one assumption, that among Kustodiev's audience was Emilio Castelar (1832-1899), with whom also he was probably personally acquainted,¹⁰ and who incidentally was considered, however without satisfactory corroboration, one of the connoisseurs of Russian literature at the beginning of the 70s, that is, at a time when very few educated Spaniards had any sort of complete idea of Russian literature.¹¹ We shall note, by the way, that Castelar was, probably, one of the first Spanish writers to write about Puskin. Although his opinions about the Russian poet were noted in other European countries and even published in Italian translations,¹² still in Russia they evoked fully-merited bewilderment and negative reactions.¹³ Castelar wrote as well about Herzen,¹⁴ about trends in Russian social thought of the mid-XIX century, which, however, were difficult for him to grasp. A Russian traveller reported in a book of his travel sketches about a meeting with Castelar in Madrid in 1872: «Castelar, I reckon, is the only Spaniard capable of discussing Granovsky, Pavlov, Stankevich, Belinsky, and Chaadayev,» but he immediately added, «In all of his often apt discussions, Castelar seemed to me a very practical and cautious man, because he was more ready to hear than to speak about Russia, and did not express his opinion on the basis of those one-sided facts which he had at his disposal.»¹⁵ And indeed, the facts which form the basis of his latest book, *La Rusia contemporánea* (Madrid, 1881), were neither adequate nor well-founded.¹⁶ Thus, if, as we suppose, Castelar was in the audience at Kustodiev's lectures at the Ateneo and, in any event, was one of his interlocutors, then their contact did not do much to enrich this Spanish writer and political figure with information about Russian language and culture. The attempt in 1887 by E. Pardo Bazán to give a more or less detailed characterization of Russian literature, with a background of Russian social development, proved far more successful and efficacious than Castelar's florid rhetorical fantasies on analogous themes. Nonetheless, the success in Spain of the lectures, books, and articles of Castelar and Pardo Bazán about Russian writers was prepared by the interest in Russian literature and social thought, born within Spanish lecture halls, and there is no doubt that through his lectures at the Ateneo, Kustodiev had sown several good seeds in this soil.

Only toward the end of the 80s did there arise in Spain an interest in Russian literature, which was broad and expressed in diverse forms. It was precisely from this time that there began to appear numerous Spanish translations of the works of Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and L. Tolstoy. The greatest Spanish writers of that time not only made observations about them with much greater understanding than previous interpreters, but they experienced the current fascination with them.

So, for example, if we believe I. Ya. Pavlovsky, Pérez Galdós called himself «a student of Turgenev,»¹⁷ but he soon revealed a basic familiarity with the novels of L. N. Tolstoy. One of the first investigators of the Russian influence on the Spanish literature of those years, G. Portnov, came to the conclusion that *Anna Karenina* exerted on Galdós' novel *La realidad* [sic] (1888) «a direct and decisive influence, on its ideas as well as on its plot.»¹⁸ Of Turgenev's novels, according to stories told by Russian travellers, *Rudin*

was especially valued for a long time.¹⁹ Of course, for Spanish readers who did not know Russian, the significance of Russian literature came to light gradually, slowly, and fascination with it had the character of a fashionable craze. In his travel essays on Spain near the end of the 80s, V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko has noted the following anecdotal tale of his visit to the Spanish poet Núñez de Arce and of his chat with him about Russian literature. «—You are not only at home here, but among your fellow countrymen,—was how he (Núñez de Arce) greeted me,— the traveller recalls.— I glanced inquisitively toward him. He opened a book shelf and showed me an entire shelf of Russian poets: Puskin, Lermontov, Fet [Foeth], (the second edition), Nekrasov, Maikov. —Do you understand Russian? —Oh, no, he laughed, and I speak French, as you see, like «a Spanish cow.» But I have to have the poets of the whole world by my side. When their fellow countrymen happen in here, I take liberty with their kindness and ask them to translate to me. So, as concerns Puskin himself, 'the great Puskin,' I am terribly fond of some of his very smallest things. For example, —and he, opening a book, showed me «Under the blue sky of one's native country» «On the hills of Georgia lie nocturnal shadows,» «Don't sing, beauty, in my presence,» and others. Interlinear translations were pencilled in the margins. In a copy of Lermontov, he had marked several passages in *Demon* and five or six little pieces. —I even attempted to translate a little something. But I don't have much luck at it.» «All of his information about Russian literature ceased at this,» —the Russian traveller notes about Núñez de Arce and declares: «He considered Turgenev a Russian only by descent, but thought that he always wrote in French. He heard that Dostoevsky had died in a forced labor camp, flogged to death by executioners. He was unspeakably surprised when he heard that some Spanish writers have been translated here in our country. And when I informed him that Spanish dramas, thanks to S. A. Yuriev, are running on the stage of the Moscow Maly Teatr, he thanked me warmly, and shook my hand, apparently, taking it not to be the truth, but rather a wish to tell him, a Spaniard, something pleasant.»²⁰ Incidentally, the lack of knowledge of Russian in Spain does not warrant any particular blame, as is shown in the story above. This lack of knowledge did not impede even the first acquaintanceship with Russian literature through the help of foreign translations, French or Italian, which appeared in abundance in those years, and in no small way this facilitated Russian literature's popularity in all Romance countries. According to the report by V. A. Krylov, who went to Spain in 1886, he was greeted affably there by Spanish dramatists who discussed professional matters with him and the possibility of a mutual exchange of repertory plays between Petersburg and Madrid theaters.²¹ At the turn of the century, there had been established already close interrelations and firm bonds between Russian and Spanish literatures.²²

NOTES

¹ G. Portnov (G. Portnoff, *La literatura rusa en España* (Instituto de las Españas [New York, 1932], p. 37) —citing the opinion of Enrique Díez-Canedo («Conversaciones literarias»), who maintained that interest in Russian literature in Spain grew up around 1880— moves

that date to the end of the 80s. Earlier, V. V. Rakhmanov (in the essay «Russian literature in Spain,» *Yazyk i Literatura [Language and Literature]*, [Leningrad, 1930], V, p. 333) noted: «Russian literature before Dostoevsky, Turgenev, and Tolstoy practically does not exist for the Spaniards.» But in Spain, acquaintance with the above-mentioned writers also was quite late in comparison with other Western European countries.

² Concerning Emilia Pardo Bazán's book, see: J. Valera, «Con motivo de las novelas rusas», *Revista de España*, 1887, 10 July; V. V. Lesevich, «Views of Spanish Criticism of the Russian Novel and Russian Life», *Russkaya Mysl [Russian Thought]*, 1888, bk. 10, pp. 98-113; on a personal acquaintance with E. Pardo Bazán see: V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko, *Ocherki Ispanii, Iz putyevkh vospominyaniy [Essays on Spain: From Travel Memoirs]*, (Moscow, 1888), 1, pp. 439-50. Pardo Bazán's views evoked a negative reaction in an essay by Pompeyo Jener in *El Liberal* (1889) referred to in *Istorichesky Vestnik [Historical Herald]* (1889), No. 4, p. 237.

³ On the early history of the «Ateneo», there is a short work: Rafael María de Labra, *El Ateneo de Madrid* (Madrid, 1867).

⁴ Werner Mulerdt, «Das Ateneo», *Die Neueren Sprachen* (1924), XXXII, No. 1, pp. 61-69; L. Yu. Sepyelyavich, «From Spain», *Obrazovaniye [Education]*, (1903), No. 1, section II, pp. 22-32; see also the article «Ateneo», *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada* (Espasa), vol. 6.

⁵ For a list of them, see the book: S. D. Sokolov, *Saratovtsy pisateli i uchenye [Writers and Scholars from Saratov]*, (Saratov, 1913), pp. 244-252.

⁶ Prof. T. - sky, «K. L. Kustodiev and his Life in Spain», *Strannik [The Wanderer]*, (1884, January), pp. 71-88.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹⁰ In one of Kustodiev's early essays, which he wrote in Spain, «The Last Auto-da-fé in Seville», *Russky Vestnik [Russian Herald]*, (1863, October), we find his comment on the «eloquent professor of Madrid University» Castelar, whose lecture he attended on the institution of the Inquisition in Spain under the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella. Kustodiev was stunned that Castelar, «as a true patriot, honorign the 'Catholic Monarchs' and very careful in his judgment of them, allowed himself to use sharp language in laying out the characteristics of the founder of the Inquisition, Pope Sixtus IV» (especially pp. 482-483). So in the above-quoted letter by Kustodiev, where he refers to his listeners at the Ateneo —the university professors— he has in mind Castelar.

¹¹ The comments on Russian writers by Juan Valera, who was in Russia even at the beginning of the forties, became known only in recent times from his letters and diaries. J. Valera learned much from S. A. Sobolyevsky, who had friends and correspondents among Spanish writers and scholars, but the latter did not leave so much as a trace in the Spanish press of the middle of the past century.

¹² The journalist from Livorno, Aristido Provenzal, in an essay «Pushkin giudicato de Castelar» (Firenze, 1874 —I used the copy of this rare brochure, which is preserved at the State Public Library in Leningrad) cited excerpts from Castelar's article on Puskin in Italian translation, having taken it from a Madrid periodical. «Between 1874 and 1880 several Spanish translations of *Povyesti Belkina [Tales of Belkin]* were published, along with a review of *Kapitanskaya dochka [The Captains' Daughter]*, as a separate book in Madrid (1879). All of these early Spanish translations from Puskin are listed in the annotation by Edward N. Beighler «Early Spanish Translations of Pushkin» (*Hispanic Review*, VI, [1938], pp. 348-349. Here, however, and in the above-mentioned sources as well, nothing is said about Castelar and his essay about Puskin.

¹³ «Whatever comfort there may be in the circumstance that even Spanish political figures do not ignore our writers, still it must be said that it is difficult to find anything written with such ignorance and with such a misunderstanding of the matter, with such tendentiousness, and phrasemongering, as Castelar's article» —wrote B. A. P. in the essay «Castelar and Lies about Puskin», *S-Petyerburgskkiye vedomosti [St. Petersburg Register]*, (1875), No. 38.

¹⁴ W. J. Linton, *European Republicans* [sic] (London, 1892), p. 275.

¹⁵ K. Skalkovsky, *Putyevye vpechatleniya po Ispanii, Yegiptu, Aravii i Indii [A Traveller's Impressions of Spain, Egypt, Arabia, and India]*, (St. Petersburg, 1873), p. 230.

¹⁶ «V. L. Castelar on Contemporary Russia», *Zagranichny Vestnik [Foreign Herald]*, (1882), II, No. 3, pp. 519-531; V. V. Lesyevich, «Views of Spanish Critics on the Russian novel and Russian life», *Russkaya Mysl [Russian Thought]*, (1888), No. 10, pp. 101-104; I. Yakovlev [I. Ya. Pavlovsky], *Ocherki sovremennoi Ispanii [Sketches of Contemporary Spain]*, (St. Petersburg, 1889), pp. 148-149.

¹⁷ I. Yakovlev [I. Ya. Pavlovsky], *op. cit.*, p. 172 —in this same book Pavlovsky reports on his meetings and conversations with José Zorrilla (p. 359), and with Jacinto Verdaguier, who made a journey to Petersburg (pp. 397-403), etc. See also M. P. Aleksev, «Turgenev and Spanish Writers», *Lityeraturny Kritik [Literary Critic]*, 1938, No. 11, pp. 141-144.

¹⁸ G. Portnoff, «The Influence of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* on Galdós' *La realidad*», *Hispania* (California, 1932), XV, pp. 203-204; K. N. Derzhavin, «Russian Literature in Spain», *Nauchny byulleten LGU [Scholarly Bulletin of the Leningrad State Univ.]*, (1947), Nos. 14-15, pp. 42-44.

¹⁹ V. Doroshevich, «Russia in Spain», *Literaturny Vestnik [Literary Herald]*, (1902), III, book 3, pp. 332-334 (on interest in Spain for the works of Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy).

²⁰ V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko, *Ocherki Ispanii, Iz putyevykh vospominany* (Moscow, 1888), Vol. II, pp. 21-22.

²¹ M. M. Stasyulyevich i ego sovremenniki [*M. M. Stasyulyevich and His Contemporaries*], (St. Petersburg, 1912), Vol. II, pp. 464-465 (a letter of V. A. Krylov from Granada, September, 1886), p. 466.

²² V. V. Rakhmannov, «Russian Literature in Spain», *Yazyk i Lityeratura [Language and Literature]*, (Leningrad, 1933), V, pp. 329-330.